as Caretakers. This also includes certain personnel of schools and colleges under the Delhi Administration. The Ministry of Law & Justice has advised that the said amendment cannot have retrospective effect. A case for the regularisation of services of such NCC Associate Officers is under consideration, in consultation with the Ministry of Law & Justice.

Main Battle Tank Project

1186. SHRI KAMAL MORARKA :

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE :

SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the *Time of India* dated the 27th March, 1992 captioned 'Arjuna' tank full of faults ;

(b) what is the progress made so far in respect of the Main Battle Tank (MBT) project ;

(c) the estimated cost involved so far ; and

(d) by when it is likely to be accomplished ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir. However, the news report has a number of gross inaccuracies. Main Battle Tank (MBT) ARJUN, is in advanced stage of development and trials. As is common in any trial process for a major weapon system development programme, certain shortcomings were noticed in ammunition firing and track links, which have since been rectified. During recent firing trials, the tank has shown very promising results. As an ongoing activity, reliability of the tank is being improved. When ready, after completion of trials, ARJUN would be a state-of-the-art tank comparable with other world tanks of its class.

(b) 12 Prototypes including 2 fully integrated prototypes of MBT ARJUN have been fabricated. These are at present undergoing automotive and weapon systems trials. Orders have been placed for fabrication of 6 pre-production series tanks for extensive users trials and to facilitate transfer of technology to the manufacturing agencies. Two tanks have been fabricated and are being sent for trials during the summer period in 1992. The remaining 4 pre-production series are likely to be ready by Dec. '92.

(c) A sum of Rs. 225.44 crores has been spent/committed on this project, as on 31 Dec., 1991.

(d) Main Battle Tank ARJUN is expected to be ready for production after completion of trials in 1993.

Exodus of Officers from Navy

1187. SHRI S. MADHAVAN : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the *Indian Express* dated the 18th March, 1992 under the caption "Exodus of officers puts Navy in the dock" and whether Government have enquired into the matter, if so, the details thereof ;

(b) what is the number of commodores, commanders and captains who left the Navy during 1989-90 and 1990-91, separately ;

(c) what are the basic reasons for their leaving the Navy ; and

(d) what steps have been taken by Government to check the exodus of Naval officers ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) : (a) to (d) The Government have seen the news item referred to.

Naval Officers are permitted to seek premature retirement on the following grounds :—

(i) Supersession

(ii) Compassionate reasons

(iii) Permanent Low Medical Category

(iv) Absorption in the Public Sector/Resettlement in civil life within a period of 2 years from the date of normal retirement.

All cases of premature retirement are approved by the Govt. on the recommendations of the Chief of Naval Staff subject to their fulfilling the laid down guidelines/criteria and after keeping the Navy's manpower requirements in mind.

The number of officers of the ranks of Commodores/Captains and Commanders who proceeded on premature retirement during 1989-90 and 1990-91 is as follows :—

Year	Commodores/ Captains	Commanders
1989-90 . . .	9	33
1990-91 . . .	19	98

News Item 'Chinese Naval Modernisation Plan'

1188. SHRI DHULESHWAR MEENA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in "The Observer of Business and Politics" New Delhi dated the 13th April, 1992 captioned "Chinese naval modernisation plan alarm defence experts" ; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto particularly in the context of being a major determinant in India's security calculas, according to the Indian Defence analysis ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government remain alert to all developments that have a bearing on the national security, including the modernisation programmes of the Defence forces of neighbouring countries. The Indian Navy remain prepared to meet threats to India's security and her maritime interests.

Corruption charges against Chairman-cum-Managing Director of BEML

1189. SHRI RAM AWADHESH SINGH : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Bharat Earth Movers Limited has acquired wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income, in awarding contracts to known persons ignoring the interests of the Public Exchequer ;

(b) whether Government propose to hold an enquiry by CBI into all the purchases made and contracts awarded ; and

(c) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

1190. [*Transferred to the 11th May, 1992*]

रोहतांग दर्रे पर सुरंग

1191. **श्री महेश्वरी सिंह** : क्या रक्षा मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या यह सच है कि हिमाचल प्रदेश में रोहतांग दर्रे पर एक सुरंग का निर्माण-कार्य शुरु हो गया है;